

TORAS REB KALMAN



סיפורי צדיקים

*Captivating stories full of Yiras Shamayim taken from Shmuessin that
Reb Kalman Krohn z'tl gave in Adelphia Yeshiva*

Preserving the Chain

The Midrash brings a story about an elderly man whom it calls a chassid, one who does mitzvos not just according to the strict letter of the law, but also above and beyond the basic halacha. This chassid, whom we'll call R' Binyomin, was already seventy years old.

Not having been blessed with children of his own, he gravitated toward the young children who gathered to learn in the shul. Watching those pure children learning Torah tugged deeply at his heartstrings, and he couldn't help but feel a powerful affection for them.

"Tell me a posuk," he would urge the young boys. "What are you learning about today?"

The children would obligingly relay the Torah that they had learned that day, and he reaped endless pleasure from their words. From time to

time, Reb Binyomin would contemplate about what would become of his continuity after he passed away. As he aged, he began thinking about this more and more frequently. Not only was there no one to inherit his money, there was no one to continue his spiritual legacy, and it bothered him tremendously.

One day, he went into the beis medrash with a small suitcase stuffed with cash and approached the rov. "You know I am a rich man," he began. "In this suitcase lies my entire fortune. I'm entrusting it to you to give it out to poor talmidei chachomim."

"Are you sure?" the rov asked. "Your entire fortune? Why would you give it all away?"

"Perhaps in this merit, I'll receive a portion in the World to Come," Reb Binyomin responded simply. "This will be my legacy."

The Midrash continues that Hashem saw the incredible actions of this special man, that he had given away all his money to support poor talmidei chachamim, and His mercy was aroused. Although Reb Binyomin and his wife were well past childbearing years, they were granted a miracle child. After so many years of childlessness, in their seventies, they were blessed with a son.

When their son, whom we'll call Shimshon, was born, Reb Binyomin was a destitute pauper in every sense of the word. Having given away every last penny for talmidei chachamim, he had kept literally nothing for himself. The only thing he had was his precious Shimshon, whom he never let out of his sight.

From when Shimshon was old enough to speak, his loving father would carry him every day to the bais medrash so that he could learn Torah. Before his father's proud gaze, he progressed from aleph-bais to kriah and then to chumash.

When Shimshon was six years old, he began to complain that he was old enough to go to cheder by himself. All the other children walked the short trip from their homes to the shul on their own. He was the only one who arrived at cheder riding on his father's shoulders.

Reb Binyomin loathed to give up the loving task of bringing his precious child to cheder every day, but he understood that Shimshon had graduated from the stage. "It is my privilege to bring you to cheder every day," he told his little son warmly "But if you want to go yourself, you may. Please, make sure to come home right after cheder, since I'm waiting to see your beautiful face."

"Thank you, Tatte," Shimshon said gleefully, his eyes shining. "I'll come right home, don't worry."

In the morning, he took his lunch pail and skipped off to cheder, his beautiful payos bouncing. What a gorgeous day it was, and what a big boy he was being, going off to cheder all on his own.

At that moment, one of the king's generals was riding in a carriage down the road and noticed the sweet child skipping down the road. "What a beautiful little boy," he announced, ordering the driver to pull up beside the child. The carriage stopped and the general alighted.

"Hello, little boy," he said to Shimshon.

Shimshon smiled back, a tad fearfully.

"You, little boy, are coming with me," the general continued, lifting a now kicking Shimshon off the ground and placing him inside the carriage. "I have no children of my own, and so you will now become my son."

"Put me back down!" Shimshon hollered in fear. "I want to go home!"

The general just offered him another smile and motioned to the driver to increase his speed. As

Shimshon continued protesting vocally, the carriage left the town.

At home, Shimshon's elderly parents waited for him to return home from cheder. They discussed how their little boy was becoming so independent, and smiled as they recalled how pleased he had been to have received permission to go to cheder on his own.

As the hours passed and the usual time of his return came and went, however, they began to grow apprehensive. Had something happened to their precious only child?

"He's probably having a good time with his friends, and he forgot to come home right away,"

Reb Binyomin tried to calm his anxious wife, even as he himself was just as nervous as she was. "Let's go down to the cheder and pick him up."

Lifting their aching bones carefully off their chairs, Reb Binyomin and his wife prepared to leave the house. When they were ready, they reached for their canes and made their slow trek to the shul. They found the bais medrash more or less deserted, save for the melamed, who was learning quietly in a corner by himself.

"Where is the child we sent you this morning?"

Reb Binyomin asked him, the thick knot of worry tightening in his stomach.

"What do you mean?" the teacher asked, lifting his eyebrows. "Shimshon didn't come to cheder today."

Reb Binyomin's face turned white. "He never came?" he whispered faintly. "Are you sure? That means he's been missing since morning!"

A pained cry emerged from deep within the elderly father. Together with his wife, they

retraced all the possible routes that Shimshon could have taken to cheder, hoping to find him sleeping on the side of the road, or perhaps slightly injured. Yet they found absolutely no trace of him.

They questioned everyone they passed, passing on Shimshon's description, yet no one had seen him since morning. His trail was completely cold. The child that they had been granted so suddenly in their old age had vanished.

The pain of Reb Binyomin and his wife was so intense that they fell onto the dirt path where they had last glimpsed their little son and began rolling around in the dirt, as if in physical agony. They did not know how they could continue to live without their beloved only child.

"Aibeshter," Reb Binyomin pleaded as he lay awake, night after night, haunted by the empty bed that belonged to his precious Shimshon. "You have granted us this unbelievable gift at this late stage in our lives. We are so grateful for every day we had with our Shimshon. Please! We need him back! This is too much for us to bear!"

The grieving parents understood that their son had been kidnapped, but they had no idea how to get him back. Whoever had snatched him off the streets apparently planned on keeping him, and there was no way of knowing which country the child was brought to. Still, despite the hopelessness of the situation, Reb Binyomin and his wife continued to daven with every fiber of their being for their son's safe and speedy return.

When the general abducted Shimshon, he brought him back to his hometown, the capital city of a country far from Shimshon's birthplace. It was very difficult for the sensitive child, who constantly longed for his parents. He found it impossible to get used to the non-Jewish environment in which he so suddenly found himself.

The Midrash relates that Hashem saw the intense pain of Reb Binyomin, and He heard the hundreds of tefillos pleading for the return of his son. Once more, Hashem's mercy was aroused, and He brought a severe illness upon the king.

"Bring me the Sefer Refuos," the sick king requested his advisors. "I would like to read it and find myself a cure."

A servant was dispatched to the king's vast library and returned with what he presumed to be the legendary Sefer Refuos. Unable to read Hebrew, however, he had mistakenly brought back a Chumash Bereishes.

The king flipped through the volume, pursing his lips. He, too, could not read Hebrew, and he could not decipher the strange letters written inside. "I can't read this," he grumbled to his closest advisor. "Read me the cures in this book!"

The advisor picked up the eyeglass hanging on a chain from his neck and peered into the sefer. "I apologize, your Majesty, but I, too, do not understand the writing in this book."

The book was passed around from hand to hand, but no one in the king's court could read the language that the Sefer Refuos was written in. The king, sickly and weak, was growing frustrated, afraid he would die before he managed to uncover a cure for his illness.

Finally, one courtier who glanced at the mysterious letters in the book provided a small clue. "Your Majesty, this book appears to be written in Hebrew letters. Although I myself cannot read Hebrew, any Jew will be able to do so easily. If you summon a Jew here, he should be able to read you the cures written inside."

This proved a lot easier said than done, since there were no Jews residing in the capital city, as per the king's decree. No one in the king's inner circle

knew any Jews nor did they have any idea where to find one. The king grew weaker and weaker, and still, there was no one to decipher what was written inside the book.

Soon news of the king's desperate search for a Jew reached the ears of his general. He immediately secured an audience with the king and admitted to having abducted a Jewish child some time before. "He's a young boy, but clever," the general told the king. "Perhaps he will understand the writing in the Sefer Refuos."

Later that day, Shimshon was brought before the king. His face shining with pure Jewish chein, he bowed respectfully.

"Come here, child," the king requested, beckoning weakly with his finger. He gestured at the book lying on the table beside him. "Can you read this book?"

Shimshon glanced at the book. It was a sefer Bereishes, the exact chumash he had been learning in cheder before he had been swiped off the streets of his hometown. "I can, your Majesty," he responded in a clear, piping voice. "Go ahead," the king urged.

Shimshon opened the sefer to the very first posuk and began chanting the words until he reached 'Vayachulu hashamayim.' His melodious voice and expert recital of the trop enchanted the king, who had never heard such a pure tune.

"Explain to me the meaning of the words you are chanting, child," the king requested. "What is this Sefer Refuos?"

Shimshon was a bright child, but he was only six years old, far too young to grasp the depth and meaning of the difficult pesukim of Bereishes. Yet at this moment, Hashem opened up his mind, and he began to explain to the king, with

tremendous depth and clarity, the complex concepts of bryas haolam.

The king listened in awe, feeling a rush of vitality spread through him as Shimshon walked him through the pesukim. Such brilliance! Such wisdom! To the shock of his aides, he rose from the throne on which he had been slumped weakly with a strength they hadn't seen in weeks.

"I have never heard such wisdom in my entire life, and from a child this young!" he declared. "Child, you sit in my place. It is you, not I, deserving of this throne."

Shimshon hesitated, trying to comprehend what was happening. Could the king be relinquishing his crown onto the head of a young boy like himself? His lower lip began trembling and he threw himself at the king's feet. "Your Majesty," he whispered, tears flowing from his eyes. "Your Majesty!"

In a display of respect and affection, the king knelt beside the weeping child and placed a comforting arm on his shoulder. "What's the matter, child? What can I do for you?"

Shimshon's crying grew more intense. "I am an only child to my elderly parents," he sobbed. "All I want is to go home. Please, take me back to my parents!"

The king cupped his bejeweled hands around Shimshon's face and looked into his eyes. "Stay here with me, child," he said softly. "I'll make you my viceroy. You are more brilliant than all of my advisors put together. Stay with me, and you'll have honor and power and riches. I need someone like you."

"I wish I could stay here and serve you," Shimshon responded, his eyes still watery. "But I need to go back to my parents. I can't lead a life of comfort and luxury while they wallow in the

terrible pain of losing their only child. Please, take me back!”

“You’ll be my successor,” the king said temptingly. “You’ll inherit the crown after I pass on.”

“Thank you, your Majesty, but I must decline,” Shimshon said respectfully. “My parents are suffering without me. All I want is to return to them.”

“You are unique, child,” the king told him, a small smile playing on his lips. He sank back onto his throne. “I would have never believed that a young child would love and respect his parents to the extent that he would pass up a kingdom to ensure their happiness.”

The king snapped his fingers at the general, who was hovering in the background, watching the proceedings with an open mouth. “General! You were the one to remove this child from his family, and you will be responsible to return him there at once. Is that clear?”

The general bowed. “Yes, your Majesty.”

“Treasurer!” the king thundered. “Prepare for this child sacks of gold, silver, and precious jewels. He mustn’t leave without proper compensation for the new life he breathed into me with his wisdom. Indeed, I feel so much better already!”

The treasurer bowed and hastily left the room to carry out the king’s orders. The following morning, a carriage was loaded up with budging sacks of valuables, and after parting from the king, Shimshon began his return journey home. A few weeks later, he was reunited with his grateful parents.

The Midrash explains that we learn from this story that even if one only learns Sefer Bereishis, he will merit a tremendous schar. How much

greater the reward of one who teaches another Torah. One who transmits a Gemarah or Mishnah to his son or to others achieves all the more merit than one who learns Torah and keeps it to himself. While there are many lessons to be learned from this story, we’ll focus on a powerful one discussed by the Midrash.

The Midrash expounds that the reason young Shimshon received so much honor from the king was because he was careful to honor his parents. Hashem arranges honor, both in this world and the next, for one who honors his parents.

Why is the reward for *kibud av v’aim* so great? *Kibud av v’aim* is one of the *Aseres Hadibros*, one of the ten rules Hashem chose to give over when He spoke to the entire world at *matan Torah*. Honoring our parents is part of the foundation of *yiddishkeit*, since our parents are our link directly to the *shechinah* itself.

In the society around us, the precious connection between parents and children no longer exists. While parents pursue wealth and materialism, consumed by their jobs and passions, they hand over their parental duties to babysitters and daycare centers, severing their connection to the next generation. Mothers relinquish their weeks-old infants to the care of strangers, and as the infant grows into a toddler and then a child, the connection with his parents becomes more noticeably absent.

By us, it should not be this way. We thrive on our connection to the previous generations, beginning with our parents and continuing up to the *avos* in an unbroken chain of *mesorah*. If we were to be influenced by the non-Jewish society around us and the connection between parents and children would be weakened, the future of *yiddishkeit* would be in jeopardy. It is for this reason that *kibud av v’aim* is such a vital *mitzvah*, and that the reward for fulfilling it properly is so great.

One who no longer has parents and cannot maintain his connection to the glorious chain of am Yisroel through them should find a rebbi to connect to. If this is not possible, he should connect himself to a makom Torah, such as a yeshiva or shul. For it is only through keeping our grasp tightly on the chain connecting us back to our source that we as a nation will continue to flourish.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

This story is taken from tape # A313

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